Christmas Through Your Eyes

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Christmas Through Your Eyes

by EarthsickWithoutYou

Summary

It's their first Christmas as a family, and Abigail is eager to enjoy all the traditional festivities with her dads. But the holidays bring up melancholy memories from Will's childhood that make him unsure if he can partake. Hannibal to the rescue, of course!

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

“What’s *that?*” Will asked, setting his glass mug of coffee down on the kitchen island as Abigail emerged from the basement with her hands full of something black and ghastly.

“It’s a Christmas tree!” She answered blithely, heaving the metal monstrosity onto the dining room table as Will trailed her with a dubious expression.

“Or at least, I think it is,” Abigail added, tilting her head to assess the thing she’d lugged upstairs, examining it from different angles.

The front door clicked open and shut, accompanied by a familiar footfall of finest quality winter boots, then the soft shuffle of snow being shucked neatly onto the doormat before said boots were set aside.

“Let’s ask Dad,” Abigail suggested.

“Hannibal, what in the name of Tim Burton is this supposed to be?” Will asked as his husband strolled into the dining room, bearing the red vine tomatoes he had hurried to the market to procure so that this morning’s omelet would possess the freshest possible ingredients.

Hannibal’s cheeks were tinged in pink from the cold December day, his hair matted slightly to his brow by the winter hat he had left on the rack in the hall, along with his coat. He smiled as he always did, strangely innocent for him, as if he was still a bit amazed to come home like this and find his family waiting for him.

In a dark grey turtleneck sweater and black trousers which fit him to a tee as usual, Hannibal looked so much more relaxed in what had become his “weekend mode” of apparel since they had been a family. Will liked to think it was his and Abigail’s influence, showing Hannibal how to dress down just a little bit when they set aside time to relax. And damn, did it look good on him, bringing out the lustrous silver in his hair. Altogether, Hannibal looked like the coziest winter treat Will had ever seen, and he had to swallow back the urge to immediately climb him like a tree and pant out various sexual pleas to Daddy.

He could save that for later.

“That’s a Christmas tree,” Hannibal said lightly, recalling Will to the present moment and the by-now almost forgotten gothic knick knack. “I meant to bring that upstairs and set it on the hall table after Thanksgiving, but the holiday season has little importance to me, and it’s always been more of a compulsory nod to social tradition than anything else. Feel free to decorate it however you would like, Abigail.”

Will let out a sigh of relief, a relief he hadn’t even consciously admitted to himself he needed. Thank goodness he wasn’t the only one in the relationship who had cynical feelings about Christmas.

“Well, I guess I could do *something* with it,” Abigail mused, pressing a hand over her mouth to half-smother a giggle. “What did you even hang on it? Black stags and tiny little dagger

ornaments?"

"I confess that's not far off the mark," Hannibal answered, unoffended, rather amused in fact. The tree obviously meant nothing to him at all, Will could tell by his cavalier attitude and clear inclination to do whatever their daughter preferred regarding the holidays.

When Thankgiving had rolled around, Abigail had requested a big, old-fashioned turkey dinner, which they all made together, and it had been the best Thanksgiving of Will's life. It didn't surprise him that Hannibal was again malleable as to holiday plans; Will only wished Christmas in particular didn't happen to pick at his childhood scars with quite such insidious force.

"If you like, we can drive out to a farm and select a traditional fresh tree," Hannibal suggested. "The house is certainly large enough to fit a good-sized pine, perhaps in the study."

He put the reusable shopping bag full of shiny tomatoes on the table and rotated it thoughtfully, glancing from Will's nervous expression to Abigail's excited one, clearly reading Will's unspoken feelings and feeling less certain he should have voiced the idea. But it was too late now.

Abigail clapped her hands together and gave a gleeful jump. "Oh, really? I haven't done that since I was a little kid. Can we listen to Christmas songs on the way there?"

"Of course," Will smiled warmly as his insides turned to anxious ice.

Hannibal came to him and wrapped an arm around Will's waist, comforting him with his steady, deep love without the need for words. "We'll go after breakfast," he said smoothly.

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Will held up reasonably well to the Crosby-Sinatra-Cole songbook of merry Christmas carols as Hannibal drove them in the Bentley to, naturally, the hugest, most posh tree farm he had ever seen.

Abigail laughed with open-hearted joy as she raced ahead of them to find the perfect tree.

"Are you well, my dear?" Hannibal asked, and Will slipped an arm through his husband's with a complicated sigh.

"I'm okay," he said, glancing in overwhelmed bafflement at the happy families all around them chattering, sipping hot cocoa and picking out trees.

Was he a part of this world now? Could he ever really belong? Of course their family was unconventional, sharing garishly dark inclinations, but could Will trust in their unconventional bond to hold him forever? Damn this stupid season; it wasn't like him to regress to the sorts of doubts that had haunted the early times of his relationship with Hannibal.

More canned Christmas music played from speakers placed at the front and back of the tree lot, Britney Spears singing, *Santa, that's my only wish this year…* The words made him think about a more innocent time in his life, and how he had since shoved his innocence far into the back of his mind to prevent being emotionally compromised (weak) again, until Hannibal had come along to carefully, lovingly coax out his vulnerability, teaching him it was alright to accept himself just the way he was. That it was okay to need things and say so.

Caught between the sadness of his childhood and the terrifying near-perfection of the here and now, Will didn't know how to calm himself back down.

"It's just that I have weird associations with Christmas," Will elaborated as their boots crunched through the snow. "My dad never cared about it much, and when I was a kid…"

Hannibal didn't lavish any heavy eye contact on him now, when he sensed it would be uncomfortable for Will, and Will appreciated this, since he knew very well Hannibal was longing to carefully scrutinize his face to glean his feelings again.

After a lapse into silence, wherein Will intended to place his explanation, but it never surfaced, Hannibal rubbed his arm consolingly. "You do not have to talk about it right now, Will. Tell me whenever you are ready, and I will be here, patiently waiting to listen and offer any help I can."

"Hey. Have I mentioned that you're my favorite person?" Will asked, his melancholy tinged in affection.

Hannibal gave him that shy smile which was reserved only for him, the one that always made Will's heart skip a beat, even when he wasn't in the best mood himself.

"And you are mine, Will, always," said Hannibal.

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"I think it might work best like this, if it's okay with you," Will said bashfully as they stood in the library, each of them in front of a leather armchair.

The library, at least, had not been infected by Christmas; the study with its looming fresh pine, smelling like holiday hope and all manner of dreary memories Will wanted to avoid, was no longer a welcoming haven. Abigail had left to watch a movie at the home of a friend from university, and Will wanted to make the most of this time to sort out his feelings before she returned. He was between a rock and a hard place, not wanting to let her down, but unsure how to embrace the spirit of the holidays.

"Of course it's okay," Hannibal smiled, gesturing for Will to take up the seat in front of him as he took up his own, then crossed his long, elegant legs.

"I find this to have a fond nostalgic effect on my mind," Hannibal added with that coy sparkle in his eyes that normally would have set Will at ease.

Let him set you at ease, it's why you asked for this.

But Will shifted uncomfortably in the expensive, buttery chair, out of sorts, nervously gripping the back of his neck where all the tension in his body always seemed to gather and stiffen. “Hello, Dr. Lecter,” he said, to put himself in the proper mood.

Unlike the usual flirtatious lilt with which he draped the title,Will said it anxiously. Rather than “seduce me, you sexy beast,” which was his normal method of saying “Dr. Lecter,” it came out sounding like “save me, save me, please.”

Concerned, Hannibal furrowed his brow and folded his hands as he leaned forward slightly, fascinated by Will just like in the old days of their unofficial therapy sessions. “Tell me, Will,” he began.

Will took a deep breath in and out, immediately comforted by the familiar words. Still, the tension radiated through him and Hannibal’s eyes shone with increasing solicitude.

“What is it about Christmas that brings you down? Mind you, it’s a very common and entirely normal--”

“I didn’t have a normal childhood,” Will admitted, “We were drifters. I never got to put down roots, couldn’t maintain friendships. Dating in high school was a nightmare,” he added with a rough laugh that failed to conceal the myriad pain coursing through each one of the strangely vagrant years of his youth.

“Christmas must have seemed even lonelier, as you witnessed other children enjoying the holiday in full flush, whilst you endured a solitary vigil of dwindling aspiration for the same.”

As always, Hannibal’s incisive observations on the workings of his mind -- in this case, his child mind -- were spot on. This used to make Will deeply uncomfortable, yet he had learned, since the days of “bone arena” comments, to see the affection and brilliance of Hannibal’s analytical findings on him. They emerged, not from the scientific interest of yet another expert who wanted to pick his brain apart and learn how to reproduce his crime-solving genius, but from genuine love, caring, and fascination.

“Yes, that’s it exactly,” Will recalled. “I mean, I remember this one year -- I guess I was about ten. Just about ready to give up on Santa, especially since he hadn’t left me anything in years, but I thought to myself, let me try one more time. I decided to do the whole formal shebang; I wrote a letter to the North Pole and put it in the mail. It didn’t come back return to sender, so I thought wow, maybe all I had to do was ask for what I wanted, to get a really great Christmas gift, you know?”

“A reasonable conclusion,” Hannibal remarked with a soft smile for the small, knobby-kneed, messy-curled little boy with his faded but resilient hopes. “And what did you ask of Father Christmas?”

“A train set,” Will said quickly, almost turning back into his ten year old self in recalling the toy with vibrant detail. “I’d seen it in a catalogue and it was --” he laughed, “Really big and fancy, there was a station and a whole little town with houses. The train whistled and made those clacking noises going over the tracks, it was so realistic. There were a ton of figurines

that came with it; you could make up a whole story about the conductor, the passengers, the people in the Christmas town and over the -- it also had these snowy mountains you could put in the background, and trees."

It sat between them for a moment, the idea that young Will had wanted to make a fantasy village of friends and family for himself, and Will knew that even for Hannibal, the naive desperation in it was too sad to express in words.

Still, the protective tightness in Hannibal's tone when he next spoke was clear as day. "And when Christmas morning arrived?"

"Oh, it wasn't there, of course it wasn't," Will chuckled darkly, rubbing his jaw. He sat back and mused, "My dad could never afford something like that, and there was nothing in my stocking but new socks I needed for school and stale dollar store candy."

"You had intentionally asked for a toy so exorbitant in cost that only Santa Claus might have delivered it," Hannibal guessed. "In order to definitively prove his existence, or lack thereof."

"Yeah, and it wasn't some shattering realization, you know? It's more that...I had left cookies and milk out and everything, and my father didn't even take a bite or two out of the cookies and empty the milk out, just to give me that little thrill in the morning. If he couldn't afford to buy me a new toy, he could have made me something, easily, he was crafty, smart, good with his hands. But life had washed all the color out of him by then. He was subsisting...on nothing but the basic necessity of breathing, keeping me fed, warm and educated. Beyond that, he didn't bother with much. We never had a Christmas tree," he elaborated, gesturing with his hand in the direction of the next room over, where they'd set up Abigail's tree.

"Now you have a family of your own," Hannibal said, the wheels in his mind turning very fast on something Will couldn't quite see, a deep, poignant contemplation, rich with tenderness and growing intentionality. "And your daughter wants to celebrate Christmas."

"I need to be able to give that to her," Will explained, "I'm her dad, and it's Christmas. I should be wearing a reindeer sweater, making hot cocoa and watching the classic holiday movies with her, but the thought of it all makes me nauseous with all these memories, going without all that time. It's like I'm afraid to be happy at this time of year. The feeling of it seems so intense, I'm terrified to open myself up. I somehow placed all this meaning on Christmas as a kid, and now -- hard as I try, I can't get it back. There's nothing there but sadness. Don't know how to hide that from Abigail."

"I can take responsibility for whatever festivities may best suit her interests," Hannibal suggested. "It's no trouble at all. While I have long resented the season as representing the false promises of a cruel God, I do not mind participating in the sort of mundane activities which others associate with it. I can treat it with secular enjoyment, certainly."

"Hannibal, you don't have to--"

"Will." Hannibal smiled seriously, a special talent of his.

Will was still getting to know each of his smiles, from the seductive to the murderously wicked, the quietly mocking ones he saved for those he detested, the adoring ones just for Will and the fatherly, prideful ones he bestowed upon Abigail. There were mysteries still inside Hannibal, depths Will had not touched. He was fathomless, but that felt safe, Hannibal made Will feel safe for the first time in his life. Even now, struggling with memories he'd tried not to think of for decades, Hannibal was here giving him structure, balance, a paddle to hold onto, a place to belong.

Hannibal went on, "I can make the cocoa, I can help Abigail decorate the tree. I'll watch the films with her, and if all of these things make you uncomfortable, you can read or go for a walk, or ice fishing, whatever it is that you need. I have it well in hand, and there's no need for you to saturate yourself in these matters if they bring you sadness."

"Do you think that would be therapeutic?" Will asked, uncertain.

Hannibal spread his hands in a sophisticated version of a shrug. "It might take out the sting of confronting the season head-on. Abigail will understand your absence in such moments; you know her quick perception and kind impulses in these sorts of circumstances."

"I wish I didn't have so many of 'these sorts of circumstances,' so much baggage." Will rubbed his jaw, wrung dry by worries about this, ever since Abigail lugged up that stupid metal tree and Hannibal offered them a real Christmas. "I just want to be for both of you who you need, not an obstacle course of paranoias, triggers and bramble bushes."

"You are exactly who Abigail and I both need in every way," Hannibal assured him firmly. "We all have our burdens from the past, and in large part that is what has bonded us as a family. Having said that, if you do wish for me to try and make it all better, Will...that would be my own inclination."

"You've probably been intending to shower me in Christmas presents, and now I've ruined that for you with my --"

"Will." Hannibal shook his head. "You haven't ruined a thing. Of course, with every excuse provided by the slightest occasion, I will always feel the same temptation to spoil you to excess. In this case, I'm motivated by more than our usual dynamic in this regard, as precious as it has become to us both. I think it would be more therapeutic for you to give Christmas a chance. As much as it pains my former ice coldness on the topic, I even believe it would do me good. I'd like to see Christmas through your eyes."

"I don't know what to do," Will fretted, twisting his fingers in his lap, fidgeting until Hannibal smiled more softly and beckoned him with a single, easily understood murmur of his name.

Will crossed the room and sat down in front of Hannibal's chair, then rested his head against his husband's leg with a long exhale, soothed by the ritual of the older man's big hand landing in his hair to play with his curls.

"I'm afraid to let Christmas back into my heart. It sounds cheesy, but there it is. I want it, with you and Abigail, but it scares me. It brings all the memories back--" Will bit back a

small cry.

“You’ll never be neglected like that again,” said Hannibal quietly, the rumble of emotion in his voice making Will nuzzle into his leg, clinging to the fine wool of his pants. “Nor abandoned. Nor treated as anything less than the most essential, cherished companion.”

“I know,” Will said around a lump in his threat, his eyes red and stinging with tears he didn’t want to start crying over silly old sentimental disappointments. Why couldn’t he just accept happiness in the present instead of dredging up past problems to taint it all? He was being a masochist in the worst way, but he couldn’t seem to control it.

“I know that, Hannibal. Thank you. Please, can you take the lead on this, like you said? Whatever you and Abigail want to do for Christmas is fine, and I’ll be here...but in the background. I trust you to know if there’s a moment I might want to try joining in, and you can ask me then...I’ll see how it feels.”

“Like testing the water temperature before wading in deep and unpredictable currents,” Hannibal concluded. Will heard another smile, one he knew all too well; Hannibal’s thoughtful, focused smile. He could rely on Hannibal; he’d know what to do. It would be okay; after all, Christmas would be over in a couple of weeks and life would go on. Surely this year, it would be a whole lot easier to survive the haunting, worrisome season, with a loving family by his side.

“Yeah,” Will nodded, closing his eyes and submitting to the slow, methodical back and forth of Hannibal’s fingers stroking through his hair. “I trust you, Hannibal.”

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It wasn’t so bad, as the weeks went by. Will took a case from Jack, which he only did occasionally these days. He considered himself in semi-retirement from the field, but he decided a little murder investigation would be a good distraction from Christmas. As it turned out, he solved the case with almost annoying speed, and lost the excuse of anything else but fishing, boat repairs and walks with the dogs to keep him gone while his family indulged in holiday cheer.

The excuses weren’t for Abigail, who understood enough without Will saying anything specific for her to treat him with gentle, quiet care on the subject, and Hannibal had already agreed not to put the least pressure on him to participate. The excuses were for Will, who really ached in his heart to just give in, *try* baking cookies and watching movies with them, *try* ornament crafting and gingerbread house making. Every time he came back, shivering with a fresh batch of trout in his cooler for dinner, to find his husband and daughter merrily arguing over whose gingerbread house had better structural integrity and exterior design flourish, or debating the proper color distribution of the fancy glass ornaments Hannibal had bought, Will wished he had stayed home to join in. His stubborn resistance to the holiday was slowly wearing down, and it was a long walk on the day before Christmas Eve that finally changed his way of thinking altogether.

The snow had thickly carpeted the neighborhood, so that Will knew better than to subject the dogs to one of his lengthy evening trudges through miles of merciless, half-frozen-solid

ground. He let them enjoy a warm evening with Hannibal and Abigail instead, and set off bundled in his heaviest winter gear to force some harsh, frigid exercise while his family made yet more cookies and cocoa. Honestly, didn't people ever get sick of cookies and cocoa at Christmas?

Will's breath was hot against the scratchy scarf wound about his neck and half his face as he continued an absurd balancing act of clomping his boots into unshoveled sidewalks. Nobody went for walks on nights like this, but still, he'd expected someone -- the mail deliverers, at least? -- would have left footprints for him to step in, as occasionally occurred with convenience when he walked on especially snowy roads. He had to make his own path, passing rows of posh Baltimore houses, big colonials with tasteful Christmas decorations on their snow-covered lawns, all the glittering blue and white lights undeniably pretty.

It felt like he was the only person in the world right then, except that the music in his headphones told him otherwise, kept him grounded even as he almost stumbled a few times over slippery snow. This was a secret even to his husband, but although Will was a classic rock guy by heart and habit, sometimes he listened to classical on his walks because it reminded him of Hannibal. It was his own funny sentimental habit, and one of these days he was bound to admit it, especially after all the times they had danced to the Rolling Stones or Fleetwood Mac, Hannibal conceding to Will's musical preferences with barely a grumble.

Will came to the end of the latest road, resolving he'd do one more loop around the neighborhood before returning home, just as the music shifted from Bach to Tchaikovsky. *The Nutcracker.* Oh, well, he'd skip to the next track on the playlist--

As Will stopped to take his phone out of his pocket, he happened to glance behind him to make sure no cars were coming, since he would cross the street soon. The delicate, yet intensely spirited music flowed through his ears, undeniably beautiful, dripping with Christmas but somehow irresistible. And he regarded the long trail of deep boot indentations he had left in the snow behind him.

No one had made a path for Will to follow, to help him carry on with his walk. But whoever walked here next could use Will's footprints to guide their way, make the getting onward a little easier. What if his footprints, left behind in the snow, were like the sad memories of his childhood, something to *leave behind,* use to learn what he didn't want to do with his own family? He could use the knowledge of what had disappointed and ruined his past Christmases like a negative to see the positive of all the holiday seasons to come.

Will saw all the missed opportunities that his father had let slip by, chances for them to have great Christmases although they were poor, it wouldn't have mattered. His dad just never knew how to let it all go and just have fun in spite of their dire financial straits and his own sense of failure. All at once, he was sad for his father instead of himself, because unlike his dad, Will wasn't going to let years and years go by like that on untaken chances.

He walked back home about as fast as the snow would allow, and came in to hear the sweetly familiar muffled voices emanating from the study.

"This can't go on much longer," Hannibal complained about whatever movie they were watching.

“Dad, will you just relax and watch the movie? It’s not real, you always get way too involved,” Abigail laughed.

Will appeared in the doorway of the study, finding Hannibal on the couch and Abigail curled up in the chair, both of them intently watching the big flatscreen where Rosemary Clooney was warbling a dramatic rendition of “Love, You Didn’t Do Right by Me” in *White Christmas.* A big tray of Christmas cookies sat on the low table between the couch and chair, and while Abigail was wrapped up in a thick red blanket, comfy as could be, Hannibal sat stiff and prim, the way he generally did when Will wasn’t there.

“Why can’t he simply tell her what actually occurred, when she is clearly laboring under a false assumption of his guilt in some matter?” Hannibal fretted.

“Because the movie would be way shorter if they just came out and talked about their feelings,” Abigail giggled, nibbling on a cookie. “You know, it kind of reminds me of you and Dad, before you got together.”

Hannibal shot her a dubious look. “Oh, really, how completely--”

“Accurate,” Will grinned, settling onto the couch beside Hannibal and bumping his hip.

Although surprised at Will’s arrival, Hannibal’s posture immediately relaxed as his arm came up to encircle Will’s shoulder. “Mylimasis, you are here.”

“Mmm. I think I’ve seen this one, and don’t worry, they get back together at the end. Remember, they all have to sing ‘White Christmas’.”

Abigail just smiled over at her parents, then returned her eyes to the screen as they snuggled up together, Hannibal so incredibly warm, firm and perfect against Will’s cold, aching body.

“Would you like a cookie, Will?” Hannibal asked, his breath warm and sugary against Will’s ear.

“If you insist,” he relented, reaching for one of those peanut butter ones with the big chocolate chips in the middle. “Oh, wow,” he sighed after having a bite. “This is the best one I ever had.”

“I’d say it’s because you’re having it with me, but I think it is actually that I have perfected my recipe,” Hannibal posited, rubbing Will’s shoulder, then kissing his forehead.

“Either way, you’d be bragging,” Will answered, laughing, “But either way, you’d also be right.”

Hannibal blushed. “I’m so glad you’re here.”

“I’d like to be here more, for these things...Hannibal, it’s okay to do Christmassy things around me. I’m ready to try.”

“Then I am all too ready to give you the best Christmas I can possibly conjure,” Hannibal answered softly.

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True to his word, Will decided to begin his attempt at letting in the Christmas spirit by doing a little last minute shopping the next morning. In his fog of confusion, he'd only gotten a few gifts for Hannibal and Abigail. It occurred to him he should really grab some gift cards for his work friends, and as for his family...he came up with all sorts of ideas for presents, only a few of which he ended up achieving, as the crowd at the mall made him want to run back home. Still, he persevered, leaving with several shopping bags full of gifts, and two rolls of shiny red and green wrapping paper.

He had to stop by Quantico to drop off the last of his reports on the latest case, so he left his gifts for the team and headed back home feeling like he just couldn't wait to get there. It was almost dinner time; his stomach was rumbling and his heart longed to be back with his family. He was even kind of excited about tomorrow morning and exchanging presents on Christmas day.

When he arrived back at the house, he did a double-take to see that Hannibal had decorated the outside of the house with bright white lights shaped like dripping icicles. The effect was both festive and ethereal, and most definitely not something that Hannibal "I barely remember Christmas" Lecter would have ever bothered with before. Will smiled, still admiring the lights when his husband came outside to greet him, closing the door behind him with a nervous expression.

"Uh-uh, no peeking," Will teased, lifting the shopping bags out of reach. "These are for tomorrow."

"Mylimasis, I must speak with you about something pressing before you go inside," Hannibal announced.

Will cupped his adorably worried face. "What is it, sweetie? Did you put too much nutmeg in the eggnog? Overcook the fruitcake?"

"I took you at your word regarding your interest in celebrating Christmas in earnest, only I have begun to feel concerned that in my enthusiasm, I became more than usually excessive."

"*You,* concerned with the idea of excess?" Will laughed and kissed his lips, making heat immediately radiate through his own body. "Mmm. Whatever you did is fine, I give you a free pass in advance. I know you just want to make it special for me, and I love you for that."

"Dads, come on," Abigail called, opening the door and popping her head outside. "It's freezing out there. Will, you've got to see this."

Will squeezed Hannibal's hand as they neared the door; what on earth was he so tense about? He understood once they walked inside, as the entire regally severe Lecter-Graham home had been transformed into a winter wonderland such as he had never seen.

There were beautiful, lush decorations hanging everywhere -- elegant and classy, very much to Hannibal's taste in quality, but unquestionably *merry.* A large, snow-white stag in the foyer was draped in white fairy lights, and more of the lights hung from every conceivable surface.

On either side of the stag statue were the completed gingerbread houses, Abigail's a cheery country cottage; Hannibal's an almost hilariously involved castle with a red gumdrop at the top of each tower. Soft, low-key, jazzy Christmas music played in the background.

"Is that...Michael Buble?" Will asked, astonished.

"Abigail has informed me that this particular selection of music is 'mandatory,'" Hannibal explained.

Will stared in amazement as the dogs came trotting towards him, each of them wearing a sweater with a reindeer hood complete with antlers. Winston had already shrugged his off, of course, but looked just as proud as the others as Will crouched to rub their heads with a delighted laugh.

"Would you look at you all," he grinned, looking over his shoulder at Hannibal's own nervous smile, noticing for the first time that he and Abigail had on matching red sweaters with the profile of a white reindeer at the center, a fitting homage to the stag imagery which the family enjoyed incorporating into their decor.

A pretty santa hat sat atop Abigail's shining auburn hair, while Hannibal twisted his own hat between his hands and explained, "I was worried I might have gone too far. I did not wish to inundate you, my dear…"

"Isn't it freaking fantastic?" Abigail put in, bouncing on her heels. "I've never had a Christmas like this! C'mon into the study, you have to see. Oh! And these are yours."

She tossed a red sweater and a santa hat to Will, who peeled off his black one and threw his newly assigned one on gamely over his t-shirt, then settled the hat on top of his typically unruly curls.

"How do I look?" he asked Hannibal playfully.

"Like my very own Christmas angel," Hannibal answered, brushing a kiss to Will's cheek.

In the study, the tree had been decorated to stunning effect with red and white glass ornaments, shining silver tinsel and a star at the top that glowed from cranberry to silver and back again in a lovely throb of light. The fire was glowing, too, resplendent beneath the mantel topped by a long row of Christmas stockings -- one each for Will, Hannibal, and Abigail…and each of the dogs, too.

"I did the glitter letters while Dad was still fussing over his gingerbread castle," Abigail announced proudly, gesturing towards the neat cursive names on each soft red stocking.

"I don't fuss," Hannibal corrected her, raising a finger as his eyes sparkled. "I design."

There were piles upon piles of wrapped presents, much more than would have fit under the tree; they were stacked in what Will was sure would turn out to be methodical organization between the tree and their three cushy armchairs.

Just then, a sharp, jaunty whistle broke out, drawing Will's eyes down to the area beneath the tree, where…

"Oh, my God," he whispered, falling to his knees to check if his eyes were deceiving him. He watched as the perfect, happy train circled the track with a clack-clack-clack. The houses, the snowy mountains and trees, the people in the little village were all exactly as he remembered them from the worn pages of the toy catalogue when he was a kid.

"How did you ever find it?" Will asked as tears ran down his face. Hannibal sat beside him on the floor and wrapped an arm around his shoulders.

"It took a fair amount of research on popular train sets of the 1980's," Hannibal informed him huskily.

"What it must have cost you to get this in mint condition...and the time it took to set this up, to pull all of this decorating off in a day," Will marveled, laughing, crying, shaking his head, then pulling Hannibal into a tight hug.

His sadness for Christmas had melted away, leaving nothing but pure joy in his heart. He squeezed Hannibal and nuzzled closer into the heat of his neck, the scent of spicy cologne and coming home that always waited for him here. "It's perfect," he murmured, "So perfect."

Hannibal's whole body sagged forward in relief as he hugged Will back. "I'm so incredibly relieved that I haven't gone too far in doing all of this, the train set especially."

"No, no, it's just like Abby said," Will assured him. "It's freaking fantastic. It's magic, just like you."

He drew back and took the santa hat which had nearly been crushed in Hannibal's anxious grip. And he set the hat where it belonged, on top of that dear head with the silvery light brown hair, before sitting back slightly to admire the effect of his debonair husband dressed up like a total Christmas dork.

"Guys, I'm going caroling with friends," Abigail chimed in, shrugging her coat on as her fathers sat by the tree, canoodling so that she could be fairly certain they'd be inseparable all night. "Don't wait up for me," she winked, "I'll probably sleep over Rebecca's, but I'll be back in the morning for our gift exchange."

"Have fun," Will called, actually thinking that's what these days could be for all of them: fun. Actually feeling it in his heart for the very first time, that this was only the first of many wonderful Christmases they would all share.

"Don't forget your mittens," Hannibal insisted.

She rolled her eyes fondly, pulled her mittens on and departed as Will laid his head on Hannibal's shoulder and watched the train for a while, letting his eyes drift languidly from each tiny, jovial figurine to the next.

“I’ve heard it’s Christmas tradition to open up just one present on the night before,” Hannibal observed, his fingers warmly stroking Will’s neck, over his collarbone to his shoulder before repeating the stimulating motion.

“Then I guess it’s a good thing that I got you a little something that’s just right for when we have a whole night to ourselves,” Will smirked.

“How very coincidental,” Hannibal said in that sexy, smug tone he used when he had purchased something especially naughty for Will. “Because I have just that sort of gift for you as well.”

Will’s stomach gurgled and they both chuckled as Hannibal kissed him and instructed, “But first, dinner.”

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Hannibal had made them the most scrumptious glazed roast composed of choice cuts from their latest victim, with whipped garlic mashed potatoes and crisp roasted green beans, accompanied by a holiday sangria so potent that it made Will laugh, “You know this pitcher of practically grain alcohol isn’t necessary, right? You’re already getting lucky later.”

“Indeed,” Hannibal smiled slyly, “Yet, you will be quite fine with a nice full meal in your stomach, and perhaps just a little bit of what you refer to as a ‘buzz’ will make you more comfortable trying on my gift.”

“Oh, Jesus, what is it this time?” Will sighed, not-so-secretly dying to find out and to see what kind of a reaction he could get from his husband when dressed up for a naughty Christmas.

“You will just have to wait and see.” Hannibal stood with his smugness slightly offset by the wild excitement in his amber gaze on Will’s curious face. “As I have dessert as well.”

After a slice of the most extraordinarily rich and delectable black forest cake, Will felt ready for just about any mischief his husband had planned -- after all, he had his own naughty gift to bestow, his own wicked lust to play out. And just one more glass of sangria certainly hadn’t hurt; his whole body felt warm, relaxed and elated with expectation.

In the bedroom, Will handed Hannibal a red gift box, smiling saucily. “I couldn’t resist.”

Hannibal pulled a pair of silky, tight, skimpy red boxers from the box with a quiet chuckle. The underwear were trimmed in white fur.

“You even have the hat to match,” Will said coyly, leaning on hands and knees across the bed to press a teasing kiss to his husband’s lips. “There’s suspenders and a bow tie in there, too.”

“So I see,” Hannibal remarked, “It’s always important to match one’s apparel, and to dress befitting the occasion.”

“Mmmhmm,” Will smirked, snuggling their noses together before stealing another kiss. “Santa baby. Santa...Daddy.”

“You are quite determined to drive me past all limitations of restraint this evening, that much is clear,” Hannibal smiled, fire blazing in his eyes that made it obvious Will’s plan to make him crazy with lust had succeeded, and then some.

“Here is your gift, my dear,” Hannibal said with a devilish smile, placing a large silver gift bag on the bed. “I do hope you will enjoy it. Please have it on when I return.”

With that, Hannibal disappeared to the adjoining bathroom, leaving Will to investigate what he was going to be wearing.

“Ohh,” he breathed, amused but also somewhat touched by Hannibal’s selections.

There was a beautiful, soft fuzzy cashmere sweater in white tinged by silver thread, which would hang just barely over Will’s ass once he had it on. A pair of silver and white argyle thigh highs in the same fabric were also included. He blushed, bit his lip and caressed the impossibly smooth, whisper-soft material, thinking this outfit was just as cozy and domestic as it was naughty. There was something so very loving in the choice, and he slipped it on right away, his heart beating fast in anticipation of Hannibal’s return.

“Oh, *wow,* look at you,” Will murmured with aroused approval as Hannibal came back in dressed in the naughty Santa outfit, looking like the classiest, most ridiculously hot exotic dancer the holiday season had ever seen.

“You look unbelievable,” he added, kneeling on the bed as his husband approached.

Will cupped Hannibal’s face and kissed him with smoldering desire, roving his hands over Hannibal’s shoulders to grope his strong biceps. Their tongues slid together with hot, hungry need, and Hannibal’s hands wandered all over Will, testing the feathery fabric of the sweater against his warm, firm body, then massaging his bare ass with rhythmic squeezes as their kiss got even deeper.

“And you…” Hannibal breathed against Will’s lips, “Are more beautiful than I can possibly say.”

It was always a rare privilege to render this sophisticated man, who was so verbose with brilliance in multiple languages, speechless. But at the moment, Will was too overcome with fascinated desire and such utter, profound love to enjoy the victory with amusement.

Hannibal tumbled him easily to the luxurious maroon silk sheets and pinned his hands beside his head. Will looked up at him, his own cheeks rosy with excitement and the light buzz of liquor, his lips already swollen with just a few of the hundred intense kisses they would share this night. His eyes shimmered, passionate sapphire devotion in the low lamplight and Hannibal stared at him, as if he had never done so before. As if he could drink in the sight of Will, whether dressed in rumpled flannel, a three piece suit for the opera, or the skimpiest lingerie, a million times, and still never get his fill.

“Merry Christmas, my darling,” he murmured tenderly, his gorgeous accent making every word send pleasured shivers through Will’s body.

He kissed Will's eager lips again and again, taking his time to slowly lick their plush shape before plunging his tongue inside to taste the depths of need within, the two of them sweet together with the taste of brandy and fruit from the sangria. And attentively, he began to move them together, grinding his bulging erection in the satin underwear against Will's naked, equally erect length. Then Will understood how it was going to be. He smiled into the next kiss as his heart took flight and his previously mischievous wriggling against his husband's dominant hold on his wrists ceased altogether. His body relaxed completely to Hannibal's command.

Hannibal was going to make love to him, sweet, long, slow and deep through the night, exactly the way Will needed it. Gentle but rough and insistent at just the right moments, he would suck at Will's cock and tease his balls with a perfect amount of pleasurable pressure, and Will would be so achingly hard, he wouldn't have a prayer of biting back a single moaned plea to be fucked. Then Hannibal would open Will gradually, humming in bliss at the sensation of eating him out, licking and swirling his tongue with devastating expertise until Will was reduced to near-drooling desperation, soft whimpers and shaking, fully parted legs.

When Hannibal was inside him, Will would let himself be held down again with lovingly firm guidance, then filled with that gloriously thick cock as he wrapped his trembling legs tightly around his husband and *begging,* begging, completely lost to anything but the feverish need for everything Hannibal was. The darkness and danger, the rich, feral sweetness of his aura, the harsh, slick delight of Hannibal pounding into him with those low, desperate groans. These were the noises Hannibal made when he was completely high on Will's body, the smell and taste of him, the reality that Will truly wanted him with equal desperation, and although it made him savage with lust, he made himself draw it out as long as possible.

Will needed it like this tonight, the gentle, prolonged care and the intensely addicted fervor, taking him over, Hannibal's mouth burning against his and into his neck where he left deep, bruising love bites, Hannibal sweat-streaked and moaning harshly into each kiss, slowly building up the tempo and pressing to Will's prostate just the way Will liked best. It blossomed into an earth-shattering orgasm that left Will's mouth hanging wide open with a silent cry of disbelief; he was *so* loved, so excessively, obsessively adored, overflowing with pleasure, he would never be alone again. They belonged to each other, now and always.

"Daddy," he whispered, "Keep going, fuck me harder...give me everything...come in me. Please…"

Will's begging finally made Hannibal snap, as he threaded his fingers through Will's, then rode him brutally hard and fast until he burst with a throaty cry, biting harder on Will's neck until he drew blood. At this, Will let out a series of short, breathy moans, getting higher in pitch as the pain culminated, Hannibal's seed filling him with sweet, claiming warmth.

"Oh, God," Will sighed ecstatically, delirious with pleasured pain, "So good, Hannibal, please never let me go, please…"

Hannibal painted Will's lips red with his own blood, then kissed him again. They went on for several more rounds, pushing each other past oversensitivity into boundless bliss, and both of their costumes were torn in a few places when they finally fell asleep, heavily clinging together in tangled sheets.

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Will laughed when he woke up to find Hannibal still wearing one suspender over a shoulder, his lopsided bow tie barely hanging onto his strong neck, and the santa hat askew on his sex-mussed hair. Will's own pretty white sweater had a tear along the bottom from where Hannibal had grabbed the fabric into his fist while rutting hard into Will from behind.

“Oh, my dear,” Hannibal worried when his pale lashes fluttered his pretty brown eyes open, “I never intended to fall asleep before tending to your wound.”

Before Will could protest, he had darted from the bed -- how did he always seem to wake up with this level of alacrity? Will’s limbs were so pleasure-heavy and buzzed still, he didn’t feel like moving for days, and it was what...he glanced at the clock on the side table. 7am?

Hannibal cleaned his neck carefully, then applied a healing salve as Will smirked at him with sleepy-eyed devotion. “Thank you, Daddy.”

“Now then,” Hannibal smiled, splendid in his absolutely ridiculous get-up, “How about breakfast in bed?”

Will giggled and grabbed his husband, throwing him back down to the sheets, unsurprised to find he met with zero resistance whatsoever. “My thoughts exactly,” he purred.

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Eventually, they did have breakfast -- insanely fancy gingerbread pancakes topped with fresh whipped cream, plus red and green sprinkles -- and took a long, hot shower together, then donned the matching Christmas pajamas which Hannibal had acquired for the family.

“Snowmen and candy canes?” Will said, shaking his head as he surveyed the pattern on their coordinating shirts and pants. “Who are you and what have you done with my snobby, sartorially superior husband?”

“It’s once a year, Will.” Hannibal took his hand as they walked into the study where the decorations looked even more wonderful with the snow drifting in big, fluffy flakes outside the window. "Rest assured I would burn such attire on any other day of the year, yet on this day...it is somehow quite acceptable, and perhaps even preferable to a less blatantly atrocious mode of apparel."

The dogs were up, so Will took them outside, then gave them their breakfast, by which time Abigail came in wearing her own matching pjs, running to give her dads big hugs.

They spent the day opening presents, then playing with the train set until Hannibal proposed making an early dinner and Will gave him a loving push back down into his chair. “*I’ll* cook, you can take a rest for once, sweetie.”

Hannibal submitted to being pampered with only a few exaggerated sighs of complaint, somewhat lessened in impact by the big smile on his face. When Will got to the door of the study, he turned back to look at his family, at Abigail opening up her new book from

Hannibal while wearing the scarf Will had given her. He had also, finally, given his daughter the fishing gear which he had once been too insecure in his own abilities as a father to dare offering.

Meanwhile, Hannibal seemed content to lounge on the couch while absent-mindedly playing with the golden wedding band on his finger, a habit he had developed since their wedding. He just couldn't resist reminding himself over and over that they were truly wed, Will was his forever, to have and to hold.

Will loved them both so much he felt his heart brimming over. "Hey," he said, the words casual but carrying so much meaning. "Merry Christmas, you two."

Buster came running up to demand his share of Will's attention, so Will leaned down to pet his little head with a warm laugh. "And you, too, of course," he grinned, welcoming the other dogs when they inevitably joined Buster in nuzzling at their master with great affection.

Hannibal was gazing at him when Will looked over again, both of them smiling and misty-eyed. "Merry Christmas, Will."

End Notes

I'm so pleased I managed to post this before Christmas, as I wasn't quite sure it was going to happen. It's been a crazy year, of course, and this month has been no exception. Thanks so much for reading and hope you enjoyed! Happy Holidays!

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